

## [Jim Kirk]

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Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. 7.

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FEC [35?]

Jim kirk, 85, living at Old Folks Home, Tarrant Co., born Mar. 8, 1852, at Covington, Ky. The family moved to Waco, Tex. in 1853 on land adjacent to the town and engaged in trading horses and mules. Kirk started to wrangle horses for his father at 15 and at 16 joined Gypsy Tom Stanly's band which traveled from town to town trading horses. After two years he started trading for himself and dealt in the wild bronco which he broke for the saddle.

"My name is Jim Kirk, the son of Tom Kirk who lived at Waco, Tex. I was born March 8, 1852 at Covington, Ky. from where my father hauled his family in a covered wagon behind a team of mules to Waco in 1853. I was just a year old when the trip was made and of course don't have much recollection of the event but according to mother's tale I didn't enjoy it any too well. We were weeks on the way and traveled over trails and at times through mud, forded streams, and traveled through unsettled country where we did not see another human for spells of two and three days.

"We landed at Waco where dad settled on a piece of land near the town. He did a little farming, enough to feed the family, and dealt in horses and mules. He handled saddled

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and work stock. The saddle stock were the wild broncos that he got off the range which he would bust and sell.

“When I became big enough to ride I was put to work helping to handle the hosses. That was when I was 13 years of age and by the time I was 15 I was wrangling wild hosses. Most of our broncos were gotten south of Waco below the section where the town of McGregor is now located. In those days the wild bronco could be found in herds numbering 50 to a\_s high as [500?] without a brand. [C12. Tex.?] 2 They belong to no one and any person that knew how to catch the critters had the right to take those animals. A party of about six waddies would go after a bunch of the animals and it was no picnic to catch them but exciting. For me, a young lad, it was top fun chasing those speedy little animals.

“Those wild broncos were shy of a waddy on a hoss and it was hard to get within roping distance of the critter. It was necessary to crowd the broncos into a draw or gully where they could not turn around but would have to pass the roper. When no natural trap was at hand into which we could drive the critters we would have to run them until they were tuckered out so we [c uld?] get within roping distance.

“The way we run the broncos until they were tired and wearied was by the waddies working in relays. Two waddies would keep the animals on the run for a spell, then two others on fresh mounts would take up the chase. As a rule by the end of a day we could get close enough to smear the critters. We would rope and snub the broncos until we had the amount wanted then we would trail the herd home. We roped the animals together in bunches of five to ten and one waddie would lead, having his rope tied to one and another rider would drive at the rear. Six waddies could bring in as many as 30 animals.

“The selling price far a busted bronco was on the average \$25. A well busted animal that was a top critter some times would sell for \$35. A good number of the broncos were broken to work in harness by the buyers. The small farmers East of us bought a good

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number for farm work. They were too light for farm work but the system used was to work three broncos to do the work of one mule team. They were worked in rotation allowing one bronco to rest after working a few hours.

“A good mule team sold for around \$350. and three broncos could be bought for \$75. So it was the price that caused many small farmers to use the broncos. There were a few heavy work horses in that section 3 and their price was just about \$50. under the mule's price.

“We always had a demand for the extra fine bronco saddle hoss and always tried to catch the best if the critters but they were the hardest to get unless they were put into a trap. The hardest chase I had was after a beautiful young stallion that I hankered for. It took us two days to run him to the point he was wearied down and we could smear him. He was as pretty as any picture ever painted of a hoss. He had the staying ability and proved to be as good as he looked. I was offerer \$50. for the hoss many times, \$60 several times but turned down all the offers and finally sold the critter for \$100. up in Mo. while on a trip up that way.

“Let me tell how come that I made that trip into Mo., I was 16 and one day Gypsy Tom Stanly came to [aco?]. He was a traveling hoss trader. That man knew all the tricks about trading and how to fix up an old plug to look like one of the King's cavalry hosses. I wanted to get next to all the ins and outs of the trading game so I tackled him about letting me join his outfit and he took me in. I was with him for two years and learned the hoss trading business and some other things too.

“He had a wife and daughter so when I joined the outfit that made a company of four. We camped out all the time. The family lived in a tent and I used the covered wagon for sleeping quarters. We traveled from town to town and stayed in one place about a week, some two weeks. The two women told fortunes while he and I looked after the hosses. One thing that I learned was that the more folks hear about your trading ability the more they want to sway hosses with you. When we lit into a town within an hour fellows would

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begin to show up dickering for a swap. 4 Gypsy Stanly was known far and wide as a keen hoss trader that never lost a trade but them fellows seemed to think that they were the best swapers in the world and came to show Stanly up. I never saw him beat in a trade. When he swaped he always made money and he made plenty. The women folks didn't do bad either. It was not long ater we hit a town and made camp at the edge of the town until women and some men too started to call wanting their future told. In the cow towns the cowhands were good customers for the women as well as swaping hosses. The cowhand for the most part had their fortune told out of devilment.

“What I saw take place through the trading was amusing at times and some of the incidents were not so funny. Generally at the end of a week the squawkers interferred with business to such extent that it paid us to move. In those days the law covering hoss trading was not much and all trades were made at arm's length. I have seen women come to Stanly after their husbands had made a swap and cry about how they were beat and want Stanly to trade back. He would always do so providing they made it worthwhile, say a matter of \$5. or \$10. To him a hoss was a hoss and he could trade one is well as another.

“We got hold of a work hoss at Belton. It was a fine looking critter but the animals shoulders showed it was not much of a puller. Stanly swaped a wind-broken animal for it an received \$10 in boot. We tried the critter on our drive out of Belton. The hoss was alright on down hill and did fairly well on level ground but when we hit deep sand or a hill to pull that animal wouldn't pull a lick under any condition. At Temple a fellow called with a hoss to swap. He said his hoss was a good worker but a little [ligh?] for the hauling he had to do.

“The balky hoss took the fellows eye but Stanly pretended he didn't want to swap the critter. He kept suggesting other animals. That is one of the tricks of the game, pretend you do not want to part with an 5 animal the party will sure hanker for the critter. They finally get to dickering for the balky critter. The fellow asked: 'Is he a good worker?' “I don't

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know how well we can stand up under heavy work because I never put the critter to a test but I can say that if you get in a pinch with a load you'll be delighted to see it pull.'

"They made the swap and Stanly got \$25. boot. The next day the fellow came back and was out under the collar: 'Damn it you told me that hoss was a good puller and it is as balky as bell. It won't take the slack out of the tugs.' 'No, I didn't,' Stanly; I didn't say anything about the hoss being a good puller. What I said was that if you got in a pinch with a load you would be delighted to see the hoss pull. Did you get in a pinch? ('By God I sure did and that critter wouldn't pull the slack out of the tugs.' 'All right I'll leave it to you wouldn't you have been delighted to see that hoss pull?' 'Hell yes', admitted the fellow. They traded back even and Stanly made \$25.

"Stanly had another trick that made him money. He had a mule about 15 hands high and that mule was trained to make a certain pull. That was to pull a slide loaded with something heavy such as sand or stone at the end of a 50 ft. rope. The trick in that sort of a pull is to ease the slack out of the rope until it is taut and then put the pull on. If the pull is made by diving into it the slack will kill the power before it reaches the slide. Stanly would start a conversation about good pulling teams. There always were some good pulling teams in a town. which everybody knew about. The boys would get to chinning about this and that team pulling and Stanly would come back at them saying: 'If that is all those teams can pull I have one mule that can out pull any of the teams.' That would start talk about bets. When they got all bet up., Stanly would proposition them that he would a slide and put his mule on the end of a 50 ft. rope and bet the mule could over a load 6 that no team could equal. I have seen him win all the way from \$50. to \$500. with that mule. The \$500. was won in a Mo. town. When those teams reached the point when the rope was taut they were leaning into the collar and had no leverage to move forward. They would try several times and get to see-sawing.

"We pulled out of Texas about a year after I joined and traveled through the states of Ark., Mo., Iowa, Minn., and into N. Dak. I left Stanly at Fargo and returned to Texas. In those

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days I learned how to swap hosses and how to judge a hoss. Stanly showed me how to judge a hoss by its eyes. You can tell more about the staying qualities and health of a hoss through the eye than any other way. If you learn the eye you can't be fooled. A wind-broken critter, a cribber and all such hoss ailments can be handled so that it can't be detected by the ordinary hossman. Of course the next day it is all back.

"I came back to Waco and went into the hoss trading and followed it the whole of my life until seven years ago. The last 40 years I dealt here in Ft. [Wo th?]. When I returned to Waco I hired wild Hoss Jerry to take charge of picking up wild broncos and to do most of my wrangling. He and I together did all the wrangling. Wild Hoss Jerry was the best wrangler that I ever saw. He got the name he had because he was the master of the wild bronco. I was no mean wrangler, I never failed unless the hoss was loco but Jerry could do all that any man could do and do it quicker and better. He had a way of handling critters that caused the animals to learn right pronto that they were wasting time trying to go against his wishes.

"I stayed in Waco until the wild broncos moved farther West. The section where they roamed started to be settled and with the coming of humans the wild hoss departed for the unsettled west. The wild hoss kept hunting for unsettled country as the country was 7 being settle and finally the wild hoss was crowed out of existence as far as I know except for a few in some remote section. After the wild hoss departed from the section South of Waco I decided to come to Ft. Worth. I came to the city about 1897, at that time I did a tolerable lot of dealing in saddle hosses. I traded and sold those to cowhands that came to ft. Worth in large numbers in those days.

"Like the wild hoss the cowhand began to disappear. He became as scarce around Ft. Worth as the sallylulum bird. Of course there are a lot of cow folks around Ft. Worth now but they are not cowhands. Them folks are ranch-hands. I stayed at the trading after the demand for the cow pony went out and dealt in work animals trading with the farmers. I guess I was about the last of the real traders in these parts. There are hoss and mule

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dealers but I mean the old time hoss trader. I had to quit on account of my age seven years ago.